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HE WISDOM OF ISRAEL

The Wisdom of the East Series

EDITED BY

L. CRANMER-BYNG

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THE WISDOM OF ISRAEL

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

WISDOM OF THE EAST

THE WISDOM OF ISRAEL

BEING EXTRACTS FROM THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD AND MIDRASH RABBOTH

TRANSLATED FROM THE ARAMAIC AND HEBREW, WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY EDWIN COLLINS

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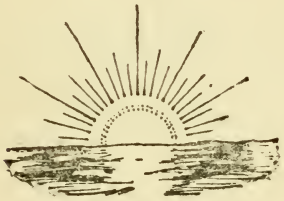

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EDITORIAL NOTE

THE object of the Editors of this series is a very definite one. They desire above all things that, in their humble way, these books shall be the ambassadors of good-will and understanding between East and West—the old world of Thought and the new of Action. In this endeavour, and in their own sphere, they are but followers of the highest example in the land. They are confident that a deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty philosophy of Oriental thought may help to a revival of that true spirit of Charity which neither despises nor fears the nations of another creed and colour.

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INTRODUCTION

THE extracts from the *Midrash Rabboth* and the Babylonian Talmud, given in this little vol., are not the work of one or two authors, or of one age. They belong rather to the speech and feeling of a whole nation than to its literature, properly so called. At first, impromptu utterances, or composed to be spoken in the course of sermons, popular addresses, the speeches of honoured rabbis at marriage feasts or in the houses of mourners, or in the rabbinic assemblies of Palestine and Babylon, these and thousands of similar parables, fables, legends, and more or less poetic playings of fancy around the facts of life, or round the popular thought and knowledge of their time and place of origin, lived in the mouths of the Jewish people, like the folk-lore and folk-songs of other nations, and were orally transmitted from generation to generation for hundreds of years before being included in the compilations where we now find them, and in other works now no longer extant. Their survival, and their place in rabbinic literature, they owe to the fact that

everything was brought into relation with the Bible or with the traditional laws of Israel; so that they became a part of the *Midrash* or study of Revelation.

The terms *Midrash* and Talmud mean this study and interpretation of Scripture, especially of the Mosaic Law, together with its application to the changing conditions—mental and material—of the Jewish people. So widely inclusive and so many-sided was this "Study of the Law," which formed the chief mental activity of the Jewish people from the times of Ezra and Nehemiah until long after the final redaction of the Talmud in the 5th century, that there is hardly a single subject of modern secular study that was not dealt with—at least incidentally; for life, as a whole, was meant to be regulated by the Mosaic Law. Says Zunz in his *Gottesdienstliche Vorträge,* still the chief authority on the subject:—"Whoever applied himself profitably to the various branches of *Midrash* was a jurist, a theologian, a man knowing in the ways of the world, a linguist, an orator—and if nothing was to be neglected, he must have no slight acquaintance with history, natural science, and astronomy." As a matter of course, specialization became necessary. But the oldest subdivision of this "Study of the Law" is twofold:—into (*a*) *Halacha*—practical rule of life, judicial decisions, the results and finished products of *Midrash*; and (*b*) *Agadah*—that which is spoken, and *placed before* the hearer, not as binding and having authority to guide him, either in practical life or in belief, but as presenting a vivid picture of ethical truth, of

beauty, or of thought, linking the less obvious meanings of Scripture with the newer ideas and with the customs of non-Jewish peoples, and providing for the spiritual or moral needs of the moment.

The *Halacha* was the transmission of the Mosaic Law in its application to material life; to civil and criminal law, practical hygiene, religious ceremonial, marriage and divorce, practical morality, the daily conduct of individuals and of the nation in every conceivable relation with each other, with the forces of nature, and with other nations of the world. *Halacha* claimed to be an exact and literal interpretation of the letter and spirit of the law given at Sinai, only modifying its details in so far as traditions dating from Moses and the prophets had provided for such modification, or where, hidden beneath the letter of Scripture, hints could be discovered, showing that its spirit actually demanded such modifications in foreseen changed conditions. Differences of opinion on *Halacha* must be discussed in the schools that combined the functions of a university and a parliament.

Not so the *Agadah*. Herein was room, and full liberty, for the freest play of individual thought and fancy. As in *Halacha*, everything must be referred in some way to the Scripture. But here there was no obligation to interpret the revealed word strictly in accordance with its real meaning. As often as not it is some new light, borne in upon the teacher from his own experience, for which he seeks a reflecting or intensifying medium in the revealed word. As a poet uses natural scenery

to illustrate the thoughts or emotions its aspect or his mood suggests, so the *Agadists* used the texts of the Bible. The *Agadata* were not the authoritative teachings of the rabbinic schools, but the occasional utterances of individual rabbis and teachers. Remarkable was the freedom with which verses of the Bible were often used to support views in consonance, truly, with the *general* teaching of the Bible, but not at all contained in the words themselves. The same rabbi would even interpret the same verse in different ways to meet the requirements of the lesson he wished to enforce. No harm was done; for every one knew that this was not *peshat*—simple literal interpretation — but only *drush*, or the homiletic use of Scripture.

This method of dealing with Scripture flourished exceedingly among the teachers of the last century B.C. and in the succeeding two hundred years, and appreciation of this fact will help materially in the understanding of the New Testament. For instance, when the verse " Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn " is interpreted as an admonition to support the preachers of the gospel, and it is added that " Moses took no care for oxen," this is simply an example of *drush*, and no one need accuse the New Testament writer of wishing to deny that, in *peshat*, this verse is one of the many strict injunctions to avoid all cruelty to animals—injunctions that form a prominent characteristic of both the Mosaic Law and the Talmud.

But from every point of view the *Hagadic* writings, from some of which the following

extracts are translated, should prove of the greatest interest to students of the New Testament, and especially of the parables of Jesus.

Trench writes * as follows :—" The parable, as St Jerome has noted, is among the favourite vehicles for conveying moral truth throughout the East. Our Lord took possession of it; honoured it by making it His own, by using it as the vehicle for the very highest truth of all. But there were parables before the parables which issued from His lips." " There cannot be a doubt that our blessed Lord so spake as that His doctrine, in its outward garb, should commend itself to His countrymen. . . . Thus He appealed to proverbs in common use among them. He quoted the traditionary speeches of their elder rabbis. . . . When He found the theological terms of their schools capable of bearing the burden of the new truth . . . He willingly used them. . . . 'Thy kingdom come' formed already part of this Jewish liturgy. . . . Nor less is it certain that the illustrating of doctrines by the help of parables, or briefer comparisons, was greatly in use among the Jewish teachers, so that it might be said of them, as of Him, that without a parable they spake nothing."

Trench quotes several examples of rabbinic parables—among them one dealing, in another way, with the subject of the one I give on pp. 19, 20, " Why the good so often die young." It is answered that God foresees that if they lived they would fall into sin. " To what is this like ?

* " Notes on the Parables of our Lord," by Richard Chevinix Trench, D.D., Dean of Westminster.

It is like a king who, walking in his garden, saw some roses, which were yet buds, breathing an ineffable sweetness. He thought, 'If these shed such sweetness while they are yet buds, what will they do when they are fully blown?' After a while the king entered the garden anew, thinking to find the roses now blown, and to delight himself with their fragrance, but . . . he found them pale and withered and yielding no smell. He exclaimed with regret, 'Had I gathered them while yet tender and young, and while they gave forth their sweetness, I might have delighted myself with them, but now I have no pleasure in them.' The next year the king walked in his garden, and finding rosebuds scattering fragrance, he commanded his servants, 'Gather them, that I may enjoy them before they wither as last year they did.'" *

"Again," he says, "there is one of much tenderness to explain why a proselyte is dearer to the Lord than even a Levite. Such a proselyte is compared to a wild goat which, brought up in a desert, joins itself freely to the flock, and which is cherished by the shepherd with especial love; since, that his flock, which from its youth he had put forth in the morning and brought back at evening, should love him, was nothing strange; but that the goat, brought up in deserts and mountains, should attach itself to him, demanded an especial return of affection." Moreover, there are very numerous parallels between the parables scattered through the Babylonian and Jerusalem

* Compare the parable of the figs which are gathered in their due season, p. 18.

Talmud and the Midrashic writings, and those found in the New Testament.

Much in the same spirit as the last parable cited by Trench, and offering a curious parallel with New Testament examples, is the *agadic* passage in the Babylonian Talmud stating that "the degree of blessedness of the sinner who repents is much higher than that of the righteous man who has never sinned, because those who have never tasted the sweets of a sinful life have not the same difficulty in abstaining from sins."

But few, if any, of the following extracts have ever been translated into English, and it is a matter of regret to me that the limits of space compel the omission of at least ten times as many equally interesting examples of *agada* that still remain inaccessible to the English reader in their original Aramaic and Hebrew.

EDWIN COLLINS.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

THE WISDOM OF ISRAEL

Why God Permits Idolatry.*

THEY asked our sages in Rome, says the Babylonian Talmud, "If your God is displeased with men's worship of other gods, why does He not make it void by destroying all idols and objects of false worship?"

"If the objects of false worship," replied our sages, "were things unnecessary to mankind and to the world, then this might be. But, behold, they adore the sun and moon, and the constellations; plants and animals; and the trees and the streams, and many other things both useful and beautiful. Shall the Creator destroy His world because of the fools?"

Then said they of Rome:—"But there are among the objects of what you call false worship some that are useless to mankind: stones and blocks of wood, and hideous effigies. If your God be, as your prophet says, 'a consuming fire,' why does He not burn up these, and spare only such as the world really needs?"

* Abodah Zarah [the section of the Talmud dealing with "Strange Worship"—Idolatry, etc.], p. 54*b*. I have rendered this freely; somewhat expanding the *Mishnah*, from the Commentaries and otherwise, and condensing the *Gemorrah*.

"If God were to destroy some of the idols," replied our sages, "and were to spare others, this would strengthen the hands of the idolaters. For then, indeed, would those whose gods had been spared, exclaim: 'Behold ours are proved to be true gods; for all the false ones have been destroyed.'

"Nor is this all. God has formed a world full of beauty and order; a universe full of exquisitely adjusted laws, that work together for good. There is nothing in it useless or evil, or even superfluous. Shall God destroy His world, or interfere with its order and the regular working of His perfect laws, because of the fools that abuse His gifts?

"Suppose a man steals a measure of wheat and sows his field with it: according to judgment and religion it ought not to grow. But Nature goes on her orderly course as fixed by the Creator, and those that treat His laws with contempt are destined to have to render an account."

The Lamp that Goes Out when its Light is Done, and the Figs that are Gathered in their due Season.

What is the difference between the death of the aged and the death of the young?

Rabbi Judah says:—"When a lamp goes out of itself, it is good for the lamp and good for the wick, for the lamp is not broken and the wick does not form coal; but when men extinguish it, it is bad for the lamp, and bad for the wick."

Rabbi Abahu said:—"When you pluck figs at their proper season, it is good for the figs, and good for the fig-tree. But if figs be gathered before their time, it is bad for the figs and bad for the fig-tree."

Then why do we often see the righteous die young?

A story told of Rabbi Chiya bar Aba and his disciples, and according to others of Rabbi Akiba and his disciples, and of Rabbi Joshuah, and also of Rabbi Josi ben Chalafta and his disciples, explains this, by a parable.

It was their custom to rise early in the morning, and to sit and teach under a certain fig-tree. And the owner of the fig-tree used to rise early and gather the figs. The scholars thought that they were suspected, and that the figs were gathered early lest the Rabbi and his disciples might eat some of them. What did they? They changed their place of meeting.

Then the owner of the fig-tree went after them, and when he found them he said:

"My masters, You were wont to confer a *Mitzvah* * upon me. You used to show me

* *Mitzvah*, from *tzivah*, to command, to permit (comp. Æthiopic use of the root), is quite untranslatable by any single word, in the sense in which it is here used, and in which it is commonly used by modern Jews. *Mitzvah* means here something commanded by God, or sanctioned by tradition and religious practice, which it is an honour and a pleasure to do; something that benefits the doer by giving him an opportunity for holiness; some ethical or ceremonial activity pleasing to God, or imparting a proud sense of self-satisfaction to the doer. Thus a rich man will thank a beggar for the *Mitzvah* of giving the latter a Sabbath meal; and, when the Warden of a Synagogue calls on a congregant to carry the Bible up to the reading desk, this is "conferring a *Mitzvah* on him."

honour, and give me a share in your reward for the study of God's word, and give me the privilege of contributing my share to your deeds of piety, by coming and studying under my fig-tree. Will you now rob me of this privilege, this honour, this religious duty; and so make void all your former kindness? Why have you changed your meeting place?"

Then they told him that they thought perhaps he suspected they might eat some of the figs, because he always rose so early in the morning to gather them.

"God forbid," exclaimed the owner of the fig-tree; "I rise early to gather the figs because, if the sun shines brightly upon them. they breed worms."

So he persuaded them to return and study under his fig-tree. That morning he did not gather the figs, and the sun shone on the fig-tree, and the ripe fruit bred worms, and was no longer fit to gather.

Then said the Rabbi and his students:

"The master of the fig-tree knows the season of each fig, and when it ought to be gathered, and gathers it. Thus the Holy One, blessed be He, knows the season of the righteous, and when it is best to remove them from this world."

The Labourers in the Vineyard.

A pious and learned Rabbi, who died quite young, was the subject of this parable.

"A certain king had a vineyard, and he hired a great number of labourers to work in it. There

was among them one labourer who worked better and more quickly than all the others, and even more than was necessary. What did the king? He took him by the hand and walked about the vineyard talking with him. And at eventide, all the labourers came to receive their reward, and that labourer came with them, and the king paid him for the full day.

"Then the other labourers complained. They said: 'Behold we have worked all the day while this one only worked two hours, and the king has given him a full day's pay!'

"Then the king said: 'What right have you to be envious? This one did more in his two hours of proper work, than you did, who toiled all day.'

"Thus Rabbi Bun bar Chyia learned more of the *Torah* in his twenty-eight years of life than many another is able to learn in a hundred years."

Midrash Koheleth on the verse, "Sweet is the Sleep of the Labourer." Comp. *Shir hashireem Rabbah* on "My Beloved went down to his Garden," etc.

Bereshith R., Chap. LXII.

The Likeness of a Palm-Tree.

"The righteous shall grow like the palm-tree," says the Psalmist (Ps. xcii. 13).

Just as the palm-tree, because of its great height, and because its branches are high up, casts its shadow a long way off, while lower trees have their shadow on the earth, just beneath

them ; so the righteous have their reward in the far-off world of the after-life.

Just as the palm-tree will produce fine dates and some that are bad, and not fit to be gathered, so among the people of Israel, some are pious and learned in the Law of God, others are ignorant, stupid, and wicked.

In another way Israel may be likened to a palm-tree. Nothing that grows on the palm-tree is useless. It bears dates for food, *Lulabs* * that are brought into the house of prayer, for rejoicing before God when The Praise * is sung ; the branches serve for shade, and the fibres are made into ropes ; while the wood serves for the beams of houses. Thus, in Israel, no one is without his aim in life, and his proper function. Some are masters of Scripture, others of the study of the traditional law, others of *Hagadah*.† The mission of others is good works and of others charity ; and others have lower, but no less useful, work in the world. None need be without his life-work. But as the central stem, the heart of the palm-tree, always grows up straight towards heaven, so the heart of the whole people, and of every individual, should be constantly turned towards their Father which is in Heaven.

*"The Praise," *Hallel,* consists of Psalms cxiii.–cxix. inclusive, and is sung in the Synagogue on every new moon and festival. During the eight days of Tabernacles, palm branches, bound up with myrtle and willows (*Lulabs*), are waved during this part of the service, as commanded in Exodus.

† See Introduction.

The Tutor and the Naughty Princeling.

The world, with all its wonderful growths, was made to teach man and to nurture him. Therefore when man falls into sin, and breaks the laws of nature and of God, nature and the material world suffer with him, for his sin. It is like a young prince entrusted to the care of a tutor. Whenever the prince was naughty the tutor was punished.

Bereshith Rabbah in explaining the destruction of the world at the flood.

Those Nearest.

The punishments that come upon Israel are greater than those that come on the peoples of the world. Because those that are nearest to God are bound to be more holy than those that are far off. To them were given more laws, and from them more is expected. "In those that are near Me I will be sanctified."

The Heritage of the Unborn Prince.

Six things preceded the creation of the world (says Bereshith Rabbah, Chap. I.). Some of them were created; some existed as ideals, as part of the thought of the Creator, to emerge, created, in the future; so that their real being (noumena) was in existence, although ages should pass before their appearance as phenomena.

The *Torāh* * was created; for we read (Prov. viii. 22–36), "The Lord possessed † me at the beginning of His way . . . or ever the earth was, etc."; so, also, was the throne of glory, as we read (Ps. xciii. 2), "Thy throne was established from of old (*Kedem* in front), Thou art from everlasting."

The patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the people of Israel, the sanctuary and the name of the Messiah, existed in ideal. For it is written (Hosea ix. 10), "I saw your fathers as the first ripe fruit on the fig-tree, at the beginning of time," and of Israel (Ps. lxxiv. 2), "the congregation which thou didst possess before all things." The sanctuary is spoken of (Jer. xviii. 2) as "a glorious throne on high, from the beginning"; while of the name of the Messiah, who is the subject of the whole of Psalm xxii., it is written (verse 17), "His name existeth eternally." R. Ahabah Bar Rabbi Zengirah says, "Also repentance, the coming back of the sinner to his God, existed in ideal, before the creation of the world; as it is written (Ps. xc.), 'Before the mountains were brought forth'; from that very hour Thou turnedst man to contrition, ‡ saying, 'Return, ye children of men.'"

The *Torah* was created before the throne of

* *Torah*, "instruction," "Law," here means the spiritual, intellectual, and moral contents of revelation as a whole.

† The *Midrash* rendering, though forced, is here quite permissible; for the word rendered in the *A. V.* "purchase," really means "to acquire," "to possess," while that rendered "of old time," *Kedem*, really means "before," "in front."

‡ "Contrition" is the *correct* translation of *dakka*, which the *A. V.* erroneously renders in this verse "destruction," a rendering entirely inconsistent with the context and not warranted by the etymology of the word.

glory, and Rabbi Jeremiah says, in the name of Rabbi Samuel, bar R. Isaac, the ideal Israel—God's witness in the world, to keep His law and spread His truth—preceded *all* else, even the *Torah*.

This may be likened to a king married to a noble and honourable woman, who had borne no children to him. One day the king was seen passing through a thoroughfare, when he called to his attendants and said: "Bring me writing materials and draw up documents dedicating this street to my son. It shall be named after him, and all that pass through it shall know that they are walking in the way that I have given to my son."

Then all the people exclaimed: "But he has no son, and yet he tells us 'Give this street to my son, name this street after my son.'"

Then some returned and explained to them: "This king is a great astrologer. If he did not see into the future, and perceive the vision of his son that is to be born to him by his queen, he would not have spoken thus."

In like manner, if the Holy One, blessed be He, had not seen, in the future, the people of Israel who were destined to accept the *Torah*, he would not have inscribed in that *Torah* the words: "Command the Children of Israel."

Bereshith Rabbah, Chap. I.

(The ideal law of right and justice, including the laws of life, the path in which all mankind will one day walk, formed the ideal aim of the whole

creation. The only reason why it is dedicated to the people of Israel, as if it were given to them alone, is because the Creator knew, from the beginning, that while the other nations would, for centuries, reject it, Israel would at once accept it. Something of the same idea is expressed in the parable of "The Traveller and Tree in the Desert.")

The Traveller and the Tree in the Desert.

Rabbi Levi spoke this parable in the name of Rabbi Johanan.

A certain traveller went forth, and for days he wandered through the desert and found no town, no village, no oasis, no tree and no water, and no living thing. And he went on, day after day, for ten days. And after he had gone on for ten days, he espied one tree in the distance. And he said to himself, "Perhaps beneath that tree there may be water." When he came up to it he found that it stood by a living spring. And when he saw that it was a beautiful tree, with ripe fruit upon it, and beautiful leafage, he rested and cooled himself beneath its shade and ate of its fruits, and drank of the water from the fountain. And it was very pleasant to him, and his soul was refreshed.

When he arose to go on his way, he said :

"Oh tree, how can I bless thee, and what can I say unto thee ? If I say, may thy wood be finely grown, it is so already ; if I pray that thy shade may be pleasant, it is so already ; that thy foliage may be beautiful, it is already beautiful ; that thy

fruit may be sweet, behold it is already sweet ; if I would pray for thee that a spring may bubble up beneath thy roots to water thee, behold the spring is already there, beneath thy roots. If I would say, mayest thou stand in a lovely place, behold thou dost already stand in a lovely place. What blessing, then, is there left for me to wish thee ? Only that every tree that is planted from thee may be like thee."

Thus, when the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world, ten generations came and went and none of them was good, and none of them produced a perfectly righteous man, and in the tenth generation, God saw Abraham and tried him, and it was found that his righteousness had deep roots, watered by a perennial spring of faith. He withstood temptation and persecution for the sanctification of the name of the One true God. He fed and sustained passers-by, and helped the penitent. He brought some of his fellow-creatures under the wings of the Divine Presence, and made known the glory of God in the world.

Then said the Holy One, "What blessing is there left that I can give thee, Abraham ? If I would say, thou shalt be a righteous man before Me, or that Sarah thy wife shall be a righteous woman before Me, or that all the children of thine house shall be righteous in My sight, behold all this is so already ! I will bless thee in that all those destined to be of thy seed shall be like thee, a blessing to all the world, and as the stars of heaven spread light for all, so shall thy seed, who shall be like the stars for multitude.

Barmidbar Rabbah, Chap. II.

Better feed the Poor than entertain the Angels.

He who does an act of kindness to those who really need it, will have a greater reward than that of Abraham, who showed hospitality to angels. Abraham stood under a tree and waited on the three strangers while they ate and drank. And what reward had his descendants? The manna came down to them, and the springs of water rose up for them; quails came around them for their food, and the cloud of the Divine Glory stood to watch over them. But Abraham's guests were angels, who needed nothing: how much greater, then, will be the reward of those whose kindness is done to the poor, who need all things?

Barmidbar R., Chap. XXXIV.

"Remember," says Rabbi Abin, "when a poor man stands at your door, The Holy One stands at his right hand."

The Sand, and the Furnace that Purifies.

Israel has been compared to the sand of the sea-shore. What meaneth this?

Men take of the sand and cast it into a fiery furnace and it comes out clear and bright, and they make glass vessels of it through which the light shines. So Israel is cast into the fiery furnace of persecution, and not only are they

saved to come out alive (Dan. iii.), but they are purified and they are knit closer together, and help mankind to see the light of heaven.

The Stars are not envious!

The righteous are compared to the stars. For, as the stars (each one of which could burn up this whole world) shine in glory, and never clash together, and are never jealous of one another, but all go on in their appointed courses, dispensing light, so the righteous are at peace with each other, and are glad when others shine. Therefore we pray for Israel that they may all be righteous, and then, "as the Lord maketh peace in heaven," so there will be peace among us.

Barmidbar R., Chap. II.

The King talks with all His Servants, Small and Great.

It is not to Israel alone that God has spoken and revealed His will; nor even only to recognised prophets, whether in Israel or among the nations. But to all who have His work to do He speaks, much or little, clearly or in parables and visions, according to their needs and according to their fitness to hear and understand.

When a king enters a province, to whom does he first speak? Surely to the Governor of the province, who has all the responsibility for the

feeding and health of the inhabitants. In like manner God spoke to Moses, who had all the trouble and responsibility of Israel on his shoulders.

But Scripture tells of God speaking to Adam and to Noah ; to the common earth man and to him who was the type of the whole human race.* This is like unto a king who speaks to his own husbandmen, his gardeners, and the keeper of his cattle. For God gave to Adam the task of keeping and tilling the Garden of Eden, and Noah he commanded to take care of the cattle, and preserve them alive at the time of the deluge.

In like manner, there is no man who has not some work to do in the world, the garden of God, or that has not some living creatures under his care.

It is no disgrace to the king to talk with the man who keeps his garden and cultivates it, nor with his herdsmen ; and the King of Kings will not leave any of His creatures without guidance.

Rabbi Chamma bar Chanina, and Rabbi Issachar of Chapur Mandai, say, that the difference between the prophets of Israel and the prophets of the other peoples of all the earth, is that the prophets of Israel had a fuller revelation. But the rewards and punishments of obedience or heedlessness were only in proportion to the fulness of the revelation given to each. Even the children of Israel were not held guilty under the law

* There are, in Hebrew, several words for "man." *Adam*, from the same root as *adamah*, the red earth, the ground, is used for all mankind in general (Latin, *homo*), and also as opposed to *eesh*, the higher type of man ; while *geber*, from a root suggesting strength, is nearly an equivalent for the Latin *vir*.

after the revelation at Sinai, until it had been taught, and explained, and repeated to them from the Tabernacle.

This may be likened to a king who issues edicts. The people in his realm are not punished for transgressing the new laws until time has been allowed for their promulgation.

Comp. *Vayikra Rabbah*, Chap. I.; *Bereshith R.*, LII.; and *Nasso*.

The Pavilion of the King's Daughter.

Why did God command the building of the Tabernacle, and sanction the building of the Temple? Surely He requires no dwelling-place. "Behold the Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain Him." "Do not I fill Heaven and Earth?" It must be for the honour of His people that He appointed the place of meeting.

Rabbi Azariah said, in the name of Rabbi Judah the son of Simon, "This may be likened to a king of flesh and blood, who had an only daughter, whom he loved very dearly! When she was a little girl he always talked with her in public. If he saw her in the court, he spoke with her, and even rebuked her before his courtiers. When she grew up, to a marriageable age, the king said, It is no longer for the honour of my daughter that, whenever my daughter wishes to speak with me, I should talk with her in public. Let a pavilion be built for her, so that whenever I wish to speak to my daughter I may do so from inside of the

pavilion." So when Israel was in Egypt, the nation was yet young: "When Israel was a child I loved him; from Egypt did I call My son" (Hosea xi. 1), and at Sinai (Deut. v. 4), "Face to face the Lord spake with you." But from the time when they accepted the *Torah*, with the words: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and we will hear," they were a fully-developed nation. Then He said, "It is not seemly for My children that I should speak to them and correct them in public; or, when I have hard words to say to them, that all the world should hear; but let them build for Me a tabernacle, and when I have to speak to them I will speak from the Tabernacle."

Barmidbar R., Chap. XII.

The Greedy Prince: The Vine is not watered with Wine.

God needs no sacrifice, but the sacrificial worship had, for one of its objects, the weaning of Israel from idolatry and from temptation to the cruelty to animals practised by idolaters in sacrificing to devils and the supposed powers of evil. Rabbi Phineas said, in the name of Rabbi Levi:

"This may be likened to a king's son, who was greedy and who used to eat at the tables of all kinds of people, and learned their ways, and used to eat unclean food. Then the king said, He shall always eat at my table, and there he shall remain."

Thus, because the children of Israel were

yearning after the idolatry they had seen in Egypt, and "sacrificing unto devils," they were commanded to bring sacrifices to the God of life, and to Him alone; to kill only in a merciful manner, and not to shed the blood of animals at all without the solemnity of an offering.

But the heathen thought their gods required food, whereas even mortal man, when in close intercourse with God, requires neither eating nor drinking; for Moses was forty days in the mount without food. How much less can the Holy One of Israel be in need of the flesh of sacrifices! The idea is ridiculed in the Psalms. Rabbi Chiya bar Abba says: "Even the lowest of God's creatures are not in need of their own produce; how much less then is the Creator in need of what He has created. Have ye ever heard it said, 'Irrigate this vine with wine, so that it may produce much wine, or this olive-tree with oil, that it may produce much oil'? These plants are in no need of their own products to nourish them; shall, then, God be in need of what He has created?"

Vayikra Rabbah, Chap. XXII., and *Barmidbar Rabbah*, Chap. XXI.

The Potter and his Wares: The Trials of the Righteous.

It is written (Ps. xi. 5), "The Lord trieth the righteous, but His soul hateth the wicked and the lover of violence."

Rabbi Jonathan said: "The potter does not

try the vessels that have been made imperfectly, because he does not doubt that if he strike them even once, it will break them. But he tries the fair vessels; for however many times he may strike them, they will not be broken. So he strikes them to show the purchaser how strong and good they are." Thus, God does not try the wicked but the righteous, and their trials show their virtue to the world. In this way "the Lord tried Abraham" (Gen. xxii.).

Rabbi Jose bar Chanina said: "This is like unto the weaver of a fabric. The more he strikes at it and cuts at it, the more it is praised, and the more does it acquire a good name. When he knows the fabric is bad, he does not dare to cut at it even once, for fear of tearing it." Thus the Holy One, blessed be He, does not try the wicked, but the righteous.

Behold this may be likened to the goodman of the house who has two heifers; one healthy and strong, the other weak. On which of them will he put the yoke? Is it not upon the healthy and strong one? In like manner the Holy One, blessed be He, trieth the righteous.

The Education of the Prince.

A certain king had an only son. Every day and every hour he would say: "Now, my son, eat," "now, my son, drink," "now, my son, go to the house of study," "now, my son, come from the house of study." There was no moment

when the king, in his love and anxiety for his son, had not some command, or instruction, or admonition for him. This is like the dealing of the Holy One, blessed be He, with Israel. Every day He said unto Moses: "Command the children of Israel," "say unto the children of Israel," "speak unto the children of Israel." It is the love of God for His people, and His will to make them perfect, in body as well as in character, that accounts for His loading them with incessant commandments.

Vayikra Rabbah, Chap. II.

The Induction Robe of the Elder.

Why are so many commands given to Israel beyond the laws of right conduct that are binding on all mankind?

Rabbi Berachia says: "This may be likened to an elder (the principal of a college for the study of law and religion) who had one long robe, about which he was always telling his disciples: 'Shake this robe carefully for me, fold it carefully,' and so forth. One day his disciples asked him: 'How is it, Rabbi, that you are so particular about this one robe? You have many other robes and you never tell us to take care of them.'

"'This,' he replied, 'is the robe that I wore for the first time on the day when I was appointed elder. It was the first outward sign of my dignity and that my words would be hearkened to, and therefore it is dear to me.'"

In like manner Moses said: "Oh, Sovereign of the universe, Thine are all the nations of the world, yet Thou dost not tell me to give all these laws to any one of them, but only to Israel."

He replied: "That is because they were the first nation to accept My sovereignty, when, at Mount Sinai, they exclaimed, 'All that the Lord commands we will do, and we will hearken to.'"

Vayikra Rabbah, Chap. II.

The King and the Weary Travellers: The Righteous know what is in Store.

All the reward of the righteous is prepared for them in the world to come, but the Holy One, blessed be He, shows it to them while they are yet in this world; so that their souls are satisfied and they go to sleep in peace, and death has no terror for them.

Rabbi Eliezer says: "This may be likened to a feast that was made by a certain king. He invited wayfarers to the feast, but when they came, weary and travel-stained, he wished that they should rest before the banquet. So he showed them the good provision he had made for them, and said: 'See, this is what you will eat and drink in my palace.' Then they laid them down and slept content." In like manner the Holy One, blessed be He, shows to the righteous, while they are yet in this world, what they are destined to enjoy in the world to come, and they lie down to sleep: with peaceful souls they accept the summons to depart from this life.

There is no material food in heaven; the angels feed on the light of the Divine Presence. (The righteous have, in this world, seen a vision of the light of God's presence.)

Bereshith Rabbah, Chap. LXII. Comp. *Debareem Rabbah.*

EQUALITY OF ALL BEFORE GOD: AND THE PARABLE OF A PRINCESS ATTACKED BY ROBBERS.

And the Eternal said unto Moses, "Why dost *thou* cry unto me?" Here, says the Midrash, is another saying (Ps. lxv. 2), "Oh, Thou who hearest prayer, right up to* Thy very presence all flesh shall come." Rabbi Judah says in the name of Rabbi Eliezar, "If a poor man approach a human being he will not be listened to at once, but if a rich man wants to say something he is received and listened to at once." The Holy One, blessed be He, is not like this, but before Him ALL are equal; women and men, slaves and servants, poor and rich. You know that Moses, our teacher, was the greatest of all the prophets; yet the Scripture puts him and his prayers on the same level with the prayers of the poorest man. It is written (Ps. xc. 1), "Prayer of Moses the man of God," and (Ps. cii. 1), "Prayer of the poor, when his spirit is overwhelmed and he poureth out his meditation before the All Present One." In each case it is called a prayer [heard by God], to show that in prayer before the Omnipresent ALL are equal. But the

* *ad*, the Hebrew word used in this verse of the Psalm, means "right up to," "into," and the meaning is weakened if we translate it as if it were *el*, "to," as in the *A. V.*

verse from Exodus quoted shows this even more forcibly. When Israel went forth from Egypt, Pharaoh pursued them, "and Pharaoh drew near," "and they cried unto the Eternal" (Exod. xiv. 10). Moses also began to pray unto the Omnipresent, but the Holy One said unto Moses: "Why dost thou stand and pray? My children have already prayed and I have heard their prayer. . . ."

But why did the Holy One, blessed be He, lead them into the terrible position in which they were: the sea in front, the enemy behind, and the mountains and the wilderness shutting them in? The drawing near of Pharaoh made them draw near to God* in repentance and contrition—they even grieved for the death of the first born of Egypt—and this was what God willed. In love He afflicted them, and in warm desire for their prayers; to draw them near unto Himself.

"To what may this be likened?" says Rabbi Joshua ben Levi. "To a certain king who was on a journey, and he heard the cry of a princess: 'I beg thee deliver me from the hand of these robbers.' And when the king heard, he came to her rescue.

"And after many days he thought of her, and wished to marry her, and he longed for her to speak to him again. But it pleased her not to do so. What did he? He sent his servants to pretend to be robbers,† so that she might

* There is in the original a clever play on the word *hikrib*, taken transitively and intransitively, which can hardly be reproduced in English.

† There are several variants of this Parable, and from one of them I take this trait. In the version from which the remainder is rendered, the king "sends robbers."

remember him and again cry to him for help, and that he might hear the voice that was so dear to him. And when the supposed robbers came upon her, she thought of her deliverer and began to call out for the king. Then the king said unto her, 'Thus, I was longing to hear thy voice.'"

In like manner, when Israel was in Egypt they began to cry out, and they looked to God, depending on His help. . . . And the Holy One began to bring them out of Egypt with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm. But He wished to hear their voice again and draw them near unto Himself with the same feeling of entire dependence on Him that had made them cry to Him before. So He caused Pharaoh to pursue after them and to cause them to draw nigh unto Him. Then "the children of Israel cried unto the Lord." In that hour the Holy One, blessed be He, said, "Thus I wished to hear your voice," as it is written (Song of Sol. ii.), "Oh my dove that art in the clefts of the rock . . . let me hear thy voice,"—a voice, any voice, is not written, but thy voice; just that same voice that I heard in Egypt (not the voice of a great prophet interceding for them, but the voice of the whole people crying out in entire dependence on God and perfect trust in Him), and when *they* prayed, the Holy One said unto Moses, "Why dost *thou* stand and pray; their prayer has already anticipated thy prayers."

Shemoth Rabbah, Parshah Beshalach.

The Father and his Son: The Bath and the Ocean.

"And thou shalt return unto the Lord thy God."

Rabbi Samuel of Pargreeta says in the name of Rabbi Meir: "To what may this be likened? To the son of a king who went away from home and turned to evil ways; and the king sent a tutor to him with a message, saying, 'Return, my son.' And the son sent him back with the answer, 'How can I come back to thee, oh sire, to be put to shame before thee?' Then the king sent again to him, saying, 'Can a son be ashamed to come back to his father, and if thou dost return is it not to thine own father that thou dost return?'" In like manner, when God sent messages to Israel by the prophets, telling them to repent, and they were ashamed by reason of their sins, Jeremiah was sent to tell them, "If you return, it is to a loving father that you are returning (Jer. xxxi.), for I have been a father unto Israel."

Rabbi Channanya bar Papa asked Rabbi Samuel bar Nachman, what is the meaning of the verse (Psalm), "As for me I will offer my prayer unto Thee in an acceptable time"? He replied, "The gates of prayer are sometimes open and sometimes closed, but the gates of repentance are always open." It is like the difference between a gathering together of waters made by man, and the great open sea. The waters that man has drawn together reflect the face of heaven

when they are not dried up, and the man-made *Mikveh* * will cleanse one from impurity, but it is sometimes closed: the vast ocean is always open. It always reflects the light of heaven, and all may bathe therein at any time.

So the hand of the Holy One, blessed be He, is at all times stretched out to receive the repentant (those that return). Rabbi Onon says, "Also the gates of prayer are always open."

Debarrim Rabbah, Chap. II.

The Tutor who Corrupted the King's Son.

The people who perished at the time of the flood, says Rabbi Yochananan, received their punishment, and have a share in the world to come. But why was the *earth* destroyed, and why did the animals perish? Rabbi Jodon said: "It is like a certain king who entrusted his son to a tutor, who led him forth to evil ways, to vice and crimes so vile that the king, in anger, slew his son. Then said the king: 'No one led my son into evil ways but this man. My son has perished, shall this one remain alive?'"

The world and its abundance led man to sin; the animals, even, were corrupt.

The whole human race are God's beloved children; for them all was created. The world had caused their ruin; it must perish with them.

* *Mikveh* is a bath in which living water flows. Such baths are made for every Jewish congregation, and used on all occasions when the ceremonial or hygienic law requires the taking of a bath.

Or, says Rabbi Pinchas, It may be likened to a king who caused his son to marry, and prepared a splendid bridal chamber for him. But the son turned to evil ways, and the king was angered and slew him. Then he entered the bridal chamber and broke down its walls and tore the curtains and destroyed all the ornaments. The king said: "Nothing of all this was made except for my son; now he has perished, shall these things remain?"

Bereshith Rabbah, on the verse "I will destroy them *with* the earth" (Gen. vi. 13).

The After-Life, and the Banquet of the King.

Rabbi Pinchas, in the name of Rabbi Reuben, uttered this Parable.

"There was a certain king who made a feast and invited to it all the wayfarers and strangers in his dominions; but he made a decree that every man should bring with him something to sit upon at the feast. Some brought with them beautiful and comfortable cushions, and some brought handsome but hard seats, and some brought sofas to recline upon, and some brought logs of wood, and some brought stones and boulders. The king provided everything for the nourishment and entertainment of all comers, and to adorn the court of the palace; but ordered that each man should sit, at the feast, on the couch or seat that he had made or brought for himself.

" Then they who were sitting on logs, and stones, and other uncomfortable and ugly seats, grumbled at the king and said :

" ' Is it to the honour of the king that we should be sitting here in such discomfort, on stones and bits of wood ? '

" And when the king heard their complaints he said to them :

" ' Is it not enough for you that you disgrace my palace with stones and logs, my palace that I have built and beautified at so much cost ; but will you also insult me and fasten an accusation upon me ? Your honour and splendour are such as you make for yourselves.' " Thus, in the world to come the wicked are adjudged to Gehinom, and they complain in loud anger against the Holy One, blessed be He, and say : " Behold we were hoping for the salvation of God, and this is what has come to us ! "

And the Holy One, blessed be He, sayeth unto them : " In the world in which you were, were you not quarrelling and fighting against each other, and slandering one another, and doing all evil things ; and were ye not contentious and acting with violence ? " " Behold, all of you kindle a fire, and compass yourselves about with sparks." Therefore " you are only walking in the light of your own fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled " (Is. l. 11). Perhaps you will say that you have this at my hands. It is not so ; but you yourselves have made all this for yourselves, therefore, " you shall lie down in sorrow " (*ibid.*), " it is at your own hands that you suffer all this." The condition of your souls in the life to come,

in the banquet of eternal splendour that God has provided, will be such as you prepare for yourselves.

Midrash Koheleth.

Many Mansions in the Life to come.

"And a man goeth to his everlasting home" (Eccles. xii. 5).

The preacher does not say to "*an* everlasting home," but "*his* everlasting home," in order to teach that for every individual righteous man there is a special home in the world to come.

This may be likened to a king who entered a district accompanied by the governors of districts in his dominions, his counsellors, many high officers of state, and a numerous retinue. They all entered by one gate, but as soon as they were in the chief city, they were all led to different quarters. Some were lodged in palaces and some in mansions, and some in more humble quarters—each according to his rank and the honour due to him. So it is with the righteous that enter the kingdom of Heaven. All must enter through the one gate of death; but the lot of each one is according to his merit. The degree of the repentant sinner is higher than that of the righteous, for they have tasted the sweets of sin, and virtue has been attained with greater sacrifice and effort.

Vayikra Rabbah, Chap. XVIII. Comp. *Midrash Koheleth* and *Babylonian Talmud.*

The Labourers in the Garden.

The Holy One, blessed be He, extends His mercy equally to animals and to human beings. He is as full of compassion for the tiniest birds of the air, as for the cattle. This is shown by the command (Deut. xxii. 6–7), "If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way . . . thou shalt not take the dam with the young. Thou shalt in any wise let the dam go . . . that it may be well with thee and that thou mayest prolong thy days." This is what the Scripture sayeth (Prov. v. 6), "Lest thou weigh the path of life, her ways are moveable, thou canst not know them." Rabbi Abin bar Cahana explains, "lest thou weigh the path of life," to mean, "do not sit and weigh the commandments of the *Torah*, do not say, 'since this commandment is a great one I will fulfil it; for the merit and reward will be very great, and as this other commandment is an unimportant one, I do not perform it.'" What did the Holy One, blessed be He, in order to guard men against this error? He did not reveal the reward attached to each several commandment, so that all men might fulfil all the commandments.

This may be likened to a king who engaged labourers and took them into the midst of his park (*pardees*) and did not tell them what would be paid for the different kinds of work there, so that they might not neglect one thing, the wage for which was small, and all go and do another thing, the wage for which was abundant. When the evening was come, he called each one of them and asked:

"Under which tree didst thou labour?" One answered, "I laboured under this tree"; and the king said, "That is a Palpal, the pay for that is a gold piece." To another who pointed out the tree under which he had worked, he said: "That is an olive-tree, the pay for that is two hundred *zuzzim*," and so on throughout the whole park.

Then the labourers said unto him: "Was it not necessary to tell us which tree was the most precious, or that for the cultivation of which the highest wage would be paid, so that we might work beneath it?"

But the king answered and said: "How, then, would all my park have been cared for?"

In like manner the Holy One, blessed be He, only revealed the reward attached to two of the commandments, the greatest among them all and the least; and the reward for each of these is length of days, as it is written (Exod. xx. 12), "Honour thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long, etc." and "Thou shalt in any wise let the dam go . . . so that thou mayest prolong thy days."

. . . . . .

Rabbi Berachya says, There are evils that smite a man like the arrow of a huntsman smites a bird, and that fly like a bird; but the Holy One, blessed be He, has said, "If thou wilt keep the command of mercy, and let the mother bird go free, thou shalt be saved from all dangers such as she fears," as it is written (Ps. xci.), "Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night, nor of the arrow which flieth by day"; and "He will deliver thee from the fowler's snare, etc." There are some commands

for the keeping of which the reward is wealth; others for which it is honour; but for this one, the pious man, if he be childless, shall be rewarded with children. For you must not render verse 7 "Thou shalt let the dam go and take the young to thee," but "Thou shalt let the dam go, and thereby thou wilt gain children for thyself"; if thou art merciful to the mother bird, thou, also, shalt be an honoured parent.

Debareem Rabbah, Parshah Ki Taytzay.

The Old Man and the Acorn.

A rabbi was passing through a field when he saw a very old man planting an oak-tree. He said to him: "Why are you planting that oak-tree, surely you do not expect to live long enough to see it grow up?"

"Ah," replied the old man, "if my ancestors had not planted trees we should not now enjoy their shade or their fruit. What my fathers did for me, that will I do for the future generations."

The Wise and the Foolish Guests at the King's Feast.

"Let thy garments always be white, and let not oil be wanting for thine head." "Doth, then, the Scripture care about white garments, and oil for the hair?" asks Rabbi Jochanan ben Zachai. "For have not the heathen plenty of white garments and many oils for anointing the head?"

Behold the Scripture speaks, in figurative language, of the commandments: of religious duties and good works, and of the *Torah*. Rabbi Judah, the Prince, likened it to a certain king who made a banquet and invited travellers and strangers to it. He sent word to them: "Wash ye, make ye clean and anoint yourselves, and wash your clothes and prepare yourselves for the banquet of the king." But he did not appoint a time. Then the prudent among them made themselves ready and waited at the entrance of the palace. They said: "In the palace of the king nothing will be wanting, and there need be no signs of preparation, but the feast may be ready at any time." The stupid among them did not prepare themselves. They said: "There cannot be a great banquet without much stir and trouble and gathering together of stores and provisions. We need not disturb ourselves until we see signs of preparation at the palace." And they joined themselves with their fellows, and thought only of their common and everyday interests, and took no thought of the word of the king. And the plasterer went to his plastering and the potter to his clay, and those working with pitch and tar, and at other dirty trades, went on with their ordinary occupations.

Suddenly came the word of the king: "Let all come to the banquet!" And the servants of the king hastened them, and pressed them to come at the bidding of the king. Then those that had prepared themselves, came in their honour and their glory, and those that had not prepared themselves, came in their pollution and uncleanliness. And the

king rejoiced over the wise that had done according to his bidding, and who, moreover, had honoured the royal palace; and he was angry with those who had taken no heed of his word, and who had polluted his royal palace with all the uncleanliness that clung about their garments, and who had treated it with contempt.

Then said the king: "Those that have prepared themselves for my presence, and were ready when I called, shall come and feast at the royal table, and those that did not prepare themselves shall not eat at the banquet." They thought perhaps they might depart, but the king replied: "No, but those shall recline at the banquet and eat and drink, while these stand upon their feet, and are smitten, and look on, distressed." Thus of the life to come, this is what Isaiah says (lxv. 13): "My servants shall eat and you shall be hungry." It is said, in the name of Rabbi Meir, that also the unprepared were allowed to sit at the table of the king, but not allowed to eat and drink, and their suffering was infinitely greater than if they had been made to stand. For they who stand and do not eat and drink are only like waiters and attendants, but those who sit at the board and are not treated as guests are shamed and disgraced.

And this is a truer picture of the life to come as indicated by the prophet Malachi (iii. 18): "Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." Let thy garments always be white in sinlessness, and let the ointment of good deeds and holiness be never lacking for thy head. . . . There is an old traditional

saying transmitted by the sages of the Mishnah, "Return to God in repentance, one day before thy death." His disciples asked Rabbi Eliezar: "But how is a man to know the day of his death, so that he may become penitent?"

"That is just the point," explained the Rabbi. "Repent to-day; to-morrow you may die."

A man should be found turning from sin to God every day of his life, therefore, it is said, let thy garments at all times be white.

The Briar Rose that Saved the Trees.

"After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do; and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do, etc." (Lev. xviii. 3). This reminds one of the Scripture, "like a rose among thorns" (Song of Solomon ii. 2). Rabbi Azariah, in the name of Rabbi Judah, the son of Simon, likened this to a king who had a well-stocked plantation. In it there were fig-trees, and grape vines, pomegranates, and apple-trees, and other goodly plants. And he gave it over to the care of a husbandman, and went his way.

After many days the king looked into his plantation to know what had grown there. And he found it full of briars and thorns. Then he called mowers and woodmen, to cut down the whole plantation. And he looked in among the thorns and he saw one briar rose. He took it and smelled its perfume, and his soul rested in delight upon it. Then said the king: "For the

sake of this rose the whole plantation shall be spared."

The whole world, which was created only in order that it might bring forth righteous conduct, beautiful thoughts, wisdom, goodness, and faith, is like the plantation of this king. And God came and looked into it and found it full of sins and sinners; and those that brought forth no good fruit seemed likely to corrupt and destroy the good plants. And He called in mowers to destroy it, as it is written "the Lord sat enthroned at the deluge" (Ps. xxix.); but for the sake of Israel, who accepted the law when the ten commandments were given at Sinai, the whole world was spared. Another Rabbi applied the same parable to these verses, but he explained the rose to mean the doing of acts of kindness, love, and charity.

Vayikra Rabbah, Chap. XXIII.

The Two Pilots.

The Midrash, on Deut. xxx., says that Moses, who was allowed to call down a blessing on his generation, when Israel had sinned in the matter of the golden calf, is typified in every verse of Psalm xxiv.; and verse 5, which refers to him, should be rendered "He shall bear a blessing (to others) from the Lord."

Rabbi Tanchumah thus explains it and says: "Thus Moses was greater than all the pious men who had been before him. Even than Noah, who could claim to be the only righteous man on

earth, and was saved when all his generation perished. For while his righteousness saved himself, Moses saved his generation, as it is written (Ex. xxxii.), "And the Lord repented of the evil He would do unto His people."

This may be likened to two pilots, on board two ships, in a terrible storm. One of them was able to save himself, but could not save his ship; the other was able to save his ship as well as himself. Which pilot would you praise? Surely the one who saved his ship.

R. Judah as Prototype of the Ancient Mariner.

"He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small."

Rabbi Judah the Prince was seated teaching the Torah amidst the great congregation of Babylon, in Zipori, when a calf that was being led to the slaughter escaped, came up to him and cried, as if to say: "Save me." He said to it: "What can I do for thee? For this thou wast formed."

And for thirteen years from that day our great Rabbi was punished by suffering agony with his teeth. . . . At the end of this period, a little reptile was, one day, passing in front of Rabbi Judah's daughter and she wished to kill it, but the Rabbi said to her: "My daughter, let it alone; for it is written (Ps. cxiv.), 'His mercies are over *all* His works. . . .'" Then Elijah the Prophet appeared in a vision unto Rabbi Judah, wearing the appearance

of Rabbi Chyia (a rabbi with whom Rabbi Judah had not been on friendly terms), and laid his hand on the teeth, which were immediately healed.

Henceforth Rabbi Judah was exceedingly friendly with Rabbi Chyia, and showed him great honour.

Bereshith Rabbah, Chap. XXXIII. Comp. *Talmud Baba Mezia.*

The Likeness of the King.

Rabbi Pinchas, explaining the passage (Numb. xii.), "The likeness of God appeared unto him" [Moses], said, in the name of Rabbi Hosea: "This may be likened to an earthly king who shows himself in his true likeness only to a child of his own household. For in this world the divine glory is only revealed to individuals; but in the world to come God in His glory will be revealed to *all*. As it is written (Isa. xl.), 'And the glory of the Eternal shall be revealed, and all flesh together shall see, for the mouth of the Eternal hath spoken it.'"

Vayikra Rabbah, I.

Revelations of Mercy and of Punishment.

When God revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush, He broke off between calling to him and revealing His will; but at the revelation in the Tabernacle in the wilderness, there was no break; while in the former case Moses was held, as it were, at a distance, and not in the latter.

This may be compared to a king of flesh and blood, who is angry with one of his servants and orders him to be imprisoned. When he commands the messenger that is to announce the punishment, he does so only outside his royal dwelling, and keeps the messenger at a distance and deliberates before issuing the decree. Thus when God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush, it was to announce punishments to Pharaoh, who also was one of God's creatures and therefore loved by Him.

The revelation in the Tabernacle, on the contrary, was a message of mercy and love only, made when God was rejoicing in His children, and when the children of His house were rejoicing in Him. Then He spoke commands to His messenger from within, as a father would speak to one of his children and place him on his lap and place a hand upon his head.

The Citizen Married to the King's Daughter.

"Also the soul * can never be satisfied" (Eccles. vi. 3, 7).

However much a man may heap up good works and pious actions, he can never satisfy his soul. Rabbi Levi says: "This may be likened in a parable to a simple citizen who married a princess of the royal blood. Even if he made her to eat all the delicacies in the world, and gave her every

* The word here rendered "soul" is in this particular verse translated in the English Bible "appetite," though elsewhere in the English Bible it is often rendered "soul." The Rabbis, in this midrash, translate *nefesh* (soul) or "life principle" as if it were *neshammah* or *ruach*, the spiritual part of man. This is a good instance of the kind of agadic treatment of Scripture described by me in the Introduction.

delight, he could never fulfil all his obligations to her. Why? Because she was the daughter of a line of kings. Thus also, whatever a man may do for his own soul he can never do all that is required of him, because the soul of man is from on high."

The Father's Voice

R. Joshua, the Cohen,* son of Nehemiah, says: At the time when the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself to Moses, it was only by the tyrannic compulsion of the spirit of prophecy that Moses became a prophet.†

The Holy One said: "If I reveal Myself to him in a great and mighty voice, I shall cause him to tremble; if with a soft voice, he will doubt whether he has heard anything, and treat the prophecy with contempt." Therefore God revealed Himself to Moses in his father's voice. And Moses said: "Here I am, father, what does my father want?" Then said the Holy One: "I am not thy father, but the God of thy father."

Shemoth Rabbah.

The Parable of the Two Ships.

King Solomon has said: The day of one's death is better than that of his birth.

When a human being is born all rejoice, and when he dies all weep. But it should not be so. Rather, at one's birth no one has yet cause to rejoice; for no one knows to what future the babe

* *Cohen*, priest—descendant of Aaron.

† *i.e.*, Moses was a meek man, timid and retiring by nature, and did not seek the honour of being a leader of men or a prophet.

is born, what will be the development of his intellect or of his soul, and by what works he will stand; whether he will be a righteous man or a wicked man, whether he will be good or evil; whether good or evil will befall him. But when he dies, then all ought to rejoice if he has departed leaving a good name, and has gone out of this world in peace.

This may be likened, in a parable, to two ships that set out to sail upon the great ocean. One of them was going forth from the harbour, and one of them was coming into the harbour. And every one was cheering the ship that set sail from the harbour, and rejoicing, and giving it a joyous send-off.

But over the ship that came into the harbour no one was rejoicing.

There was a wise man there who said: "I see a reason for the very opposite conduct to yours. You ought not to rejoice with the ship that is going out of the harbour, for no one knows what will be her fate; how many days she will have to spend on the voyage, and what storms and tempests she will encounter. But as to the ship that has arrived safely in port, all should rejoice with her, for she has returned in peace."

Midrash Koheleth on Eccles. VII.

The Child who Questioned though Carried by his Father.

Commenting on Exod. xvii. 7, "Is the Lord among us or not?" our sages say that for this want of faith the Israelites were brought in con-

tact with their enemy Amelek. This matter may be likened to the parable of a child who is riding on his father's shoulders, and on meeting a friend of his father's, calls out: "Have you seen my father anywhere?" Then his father sayeth unto him: "Thou art riding on my shoulders, and thou askest questions about me. I will put thee down for a moment in the presence of the enemy, so as to teach thee what my absence would mean."

Shemoth Rabbah, Chap. XXVI.

The King's Son without Rations.

"He hath not done so to any nation," etc. (Ps. cxlviii.).

Why did not God give the whole law to all the peoples; since all the peoples of the earth belong to God? God gave some laws to Adam, more still to Noah, still more to Abraham. He gave to all peoples such laws as they needed, and could keep, and worldly prosperity as well. The laws of right conduct, morality, and mercy, were given for all men; but at Mount Sinai Israel said: "*All* that the Lord sayeth we will do and we will hear." Therefore he showed them the distinction between clean and unclean, between holy and profane, and gave them the Law of Holiness. Rabbi Eliezar likened this to a parable of a king who went out to battle, and his legions went with him. And meat was prepared, and he gave portions to every one, rations according to their needs, and what they wanted. Then said his son: "What will you give me?" Then said the king: "I have given

thee no rations; thou shalt share what I have prepared for myself."

Shemoth Rabbah, Chap. XXX. Compare the idea with Schiller's *Theilung der Erde.*

The Poor Woman's Mite.

It happened that a certain poor woman brought a handful of flour to the Temple as an offering, and the priest looked at it with contempt, and said: "What is this to bring as an offering? What is there in this to eat?"

Then that priest was rebuked in a vision, and it was shown him that her offering was more acceptable to God than the sacrifices of the wealthy. The divine voice said to him: "Thou shalt not look with contempt upon her. It is as if she had offered her own life."

Vayikra Rabbah, Chap. III.

He who Reproacheth the Poor Insults his Maker.

When a rich man is asked by a poor man to give him charity, and he refuses, and says to him, "Why don't you go and work? Look at your strong arms and legs, and your stout body." Then the Holy One, blessed be He, says to that rich man: "Was it not enough that thou didst not give him anything of thine, that thou shouldst also cast an evil eye on him for what I have given him?"

The Voiceless Deeps that Praise the Lord: The Parable of the Mutes who Praised the King.

"Let the waters be gathered together."

Rabbi Abba bar Cahanah said, in the name of Rabbi Levi:

"Let the waters hope in Me and wait for Me," said the Holy One, blessed be He, "let them wait in hope for what I am about to do with them."

For the Spirit of God had brooded over the silent waters, and the voiceless deeps had sung His praise, and done His will in awe. All voiceless Nature had adored Him. The waters had not transgressed the limit placed for them, and the mighty deep, vast and wide, had humbled itself before Him.

This may be likened in a parable to a king who built a palace and put dumb people to dwell in it. And they used to rise early in the morning to greet the king, and to ask, by means of signs and dumb show, after his well-being, uncovering their heads and bowing down to do him honour.

And the king said: "If this palace were inhabited by rational beings endowed with speech and full intelligence, how much more would they honour me with their works and with their praise." And he made to dwell in the palace intelligent and speaking people.

But instead of praising him and serving him, they rose up and seized upon the palace of the king, and said: "This palace belongs to no one but to us."

In that hour the king said: "Let the palace be as it was at first, a home for only the dumb to dwell in."

Thus from the beginning of His creation of the world the only praise that went up to God was from the waters. . . . Then said the Holy One, blessed be He: "If these that have no mouth and no tongue, no speech and no words to set in logical order, can thus praise and honour Me, how much more will be My praise when I have created mankind?"

And when He had created the sons of man, there arose the generations of Enosh and of the time of the flood, and rebelled against Him. In that hour the Holy One, blessed be He, said: "Let the world return to what it was at first," as it is written (Gen. vii.), "and let the heavy rain be upon the earth."

Bereshith Rabbah, Chap. V.

* Compare also Mid. Aycha Rabathi, Chap. "Zion spreadeth, etc.," where the same parable is used, but the hope held out to the waters is that one day they shall be raised by the Creator to the honour of being His tears to express eternal grief for the fall of His people into sin and punishment. For, says the midrash, the words, "Oh that my head were water," etc. (Jeremiah ix.), are the words of God and not of the prophet. Of course none of these interpretations were meant as *peshat* (see Introduction, p. 12).

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